

## A B S T R A C T

A METHOD OF PROCESSING POSTAL ITEMS INCLUDING MANAGEMENT  
OF DIGITAL FINGERPRINTS OF THE POSTAL ITEMS

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A method of processing postal items consists, during a first pass for sorting the items, in taking a digital picture of a postal item bearing address information, in deriving from said picture a digital fingerprint (V-ID) which is a logic identifier for the item, and in storing the fingerprint of the item in a memory in correspondence with data indicative of the address information of the item, and consists, during a second pass for sorting the items, in taking again (51) a digital picture of a current mail item bearing address information, in deriving (52) from said image a digital fingerprint for the current item, and in searching the fingerprints recorded in the first sorting pass for a match with the fingerprint of the current item. During the first sorting pass, said method further consists, in the memory, in associating the fingerprints of the successive items with corresponding chronological serial numbers. During the second sorting pass, for a series of successive item fingerprints for which matches have been obtained with fingerprints recorded in the memory in the first sorting pass, said method further consists in retrieving (61) a series of corresponding chronological serial numbers, in computing (62, 65) an estimated chronological serial number for a current item from said series of chronological serial numbers, and in searching (63) for a match with the fingerprint of the current item on the basis of the estimated chronological serial number.

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